

T/SOL/3/56/2

M s p R I N T

no 4

A SCOTTISH FEMINIST

PUBLICATION

25p



EDUCATION
WOMEN AT WORK

Abortion.
Housing



considerable amount of motivation. Yet in 1978, Elizabeth Wilson writes "Families selected for this type of help (domiciliary service) are by definition less competent than the average at arranging their affairs and looking after their health. It is therefore unlikely that any method which depends on consistent motivation will be as successful as one which does not". Again this indicates a change in her attitude towards the women she is helping over the last few years.

I am not against the idea of a domiciliary family planning service, there are many women who, for various reasons such as disability, young children or cost of journey, find it difficult to get to family planning clinics. However, I think a woman should request the domiciliary service, it should not be forced upon her. Social workers, health visitors and general practitioners should have information about the domiciliary service, but they should not recommend visits without the woman wanting it.

I am also not against contraceptive injections - they could be a convenient method of contraception BUT only if proved to be safe. DP is not safe - if it is used at all it should only be given to women who fully understand the risks and possible side effects.

Women must have the right to control their own bodies and this means having the full choice of all available contraceptives with explanations of how each works and its side effects. If we don't have full control over our bodies we have no hope of being able to control our own lives.

1. Domiciliary Family Planning Service in Glasgow. Elizabeth Wilson. British Medical Journal, December, 1971 p.731.
2. Costs and Benefits of Domiciliary Family Planning in Glasgow. Elizabeth Wilson. Health Bulletin 32. November, 1974, p.239.
3. Domiciliary Family Planning. Elizabeth Wilson. Fertility and Contraception 2 No.4, p.50. 1978.
4. Depo-Provera - Just another contraceptive? Maggie Jones. Fertility and Contraception 2, No.2, 1978, p.26.

Nina Woodcock

Footnote

If you watched "current Account" on BBC Scotland on the 18th. Oct 1979, some of this article may seem familiar. In this programme Valerie Atkinson reported on Depo-Provera and included some of the information from the article above.

Cartoon: Spare Rib.



Christine Roche

Campaign Against D - P

A campaign against Depo-Provera has started. If you want to help please contact: Campaign Against Depo-Provera, c/o ICAR, 374 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1.

The campaign are collecting information about the use of DP and would like to hear from anyone who has had DP or knows of clinics, hospitals, or doctors who use it, and who they give it to.

It would be useful if anyone sending them information about DP in Scotland could also send a copy of the information to Nina Woodcock.

msprint contacts

Nina Woodcock
74 Arklay St., Dundee. 0382 814541
Marian Peoph
6 Leir Street, Glasgow. 041 429 0038
Joanna Glythman
17 Bryson Road, Edinburgh. 031 229 2656

SCOTTISH WOMEN'S CHARTER

The Scottish Women's charter draws together demands on divorce, custody, childcare facilities, housing, abortion, contraception and maternity services, domestic violence and rape. Conferences to launch the Charter - Saturday 12th January 1980 - in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Further information from SCOTTISH WOMEN'S CHARTER, c/o 53 St. Vincent Crescent, Glasgow. or Sheila Gilmore, 16 St. Catherine's Place, Edinburgh. 031 667 2786

FEMINIST FORUM

I was brought up in a small town outside Edinburgh. In the past it was a mining town. My family lived in what was considered the 'bad' or 'rough' part of town - Coalgate.

Until the age of eleven I don't recall any discrimination against boys or girls among my peer group who lived in Coalgate. The girls were as hardy and daring as the boys and no concessions were made for being female. The usual stereotypes did not apply in this environment. However, at school the situation was very different. I went to the local state primary and mixed sex secondary schools. We were streamed according to academic ability: the A and B classes were mixed sex but the C and D classes were single sex. The girls were geared towards the commercial courses and the boys towards the technical courses, the two courses being held in low esteem.

On the whole I was unaware of the sexism inbuilt in the school system but aware of the very elitist attitude of the headmaster and a number of teachers, based on academic ability and class. For me the question of class is very important: it has pervaded most areas of my life and I feel has influenced my view of the Women's Movement and its effect on me.

I see differences in education as one of the main barriers to be crossed - a good education generally means good job prospects and these go hand in hand with economic independence. In my home area the general attitude to education was that it was a waste of time, especially for women. This attitude was not helped by teachers who told us that we "had no breeding" because our parents did manual work, that we could not talk 'properly', that the papers our parents read were rubbish and that in our spare time we frittered our time away meaninglessly.

At sixteen I left school and got a job in a bank. On enquiry about bank exams etc. I was quickly informed that those were not meant for girls and passing them would not enhance my promotion prospects because I was female.

Two months later I was back in school. I sat my Highers and applied to go to a College of Education to do Primary school teaching. On discovering this a (male) teacher at school discussed the matter with me, advising me to go to University instead. I had never considered going to

University, I knew no-one who had and I'd assumed it was for near geniuses and not for ordinary people like myself. This applied to 95% of the school population. On going to University I was shocked when I realised the majority of students had gone to private or at least selective schools. Furthermore it had always been assumed that they would go to University. Mr. K. dismissed my fears and doubts about doing a course as long as four years as 'typically working-class and female'. This comment took me aback but was the first to raise my consciousness about both issues. However my initial reaction was hostility. I resented being defined in this way, perhaps because it hit too near the truth. Soon afterwards I took his advice, and since then I've often thought about the difference that one 'chance' incident has made to my life. But what about all those who never receive sound advice or even catch a glimpse of possibilities outside filler-in jobs till marriage?

At University I was very aware of my background and class. I felt self-conscious about my dialect. A non-standard dialect was a pretty sure marker of class. The popular misconception is that a non-standard dialect is either slang, or at best, a sub-standard dialect. Such views are based on social prejudices and not linguistic fact. However, realising this does not always prevent the dialect speaker feeling inferior or feeling that you have to prove yourself to others. It is easy for newcomers, from any social background, to refrain from participating in a discussion "to remain silent and be thought a fool rather than to speak out and remove all doubt", and if you are working class you often have the double bind of being new and feeling conscious of your class markers.

At meetings in the women's movement it was immediately obvious to me that they were attended by 'middle class' women or at least women from middle class backgrounds. This can be very threatening to someone from a different background especially if they have not had a university or college education. Hopefully we can learn something from our differences by talking more in mixed groups and appreciating each others' problems. In my home town, and this is probably true everywhere people,

including myself, tended to have stereotyped views of the upper-classes, i.e. the snobs, the rich, the privileged. The working class seem to me to be regarded as the mass, the uneducated, the workers in low esteem jobs, the comics, the friendly, etc. There is probably some truth in these stereotypes, however, they are not the whole truth and such views can be destructive.

In the women's movement I sometimes find it difficult not to feel resentment towards women who seem to me to be privileged when compared to their working-class counterparts, e.g. with regard to education and jobs. I feel resentment if they do not seem to appreciate how large numbers of women have had far fewer opportunities than them. Clearly this is what the women's movement is trying to rectify and what we want is a united front. If the movement can reach out and cross class barriers then I feel it has achieved a lot.

I came into direct contact with the movement after I had picked up a copy of Spare Rib in a bookshop and saw the contact number for Edinburgh. My marriage had broken down and this coupled with some of the situations I have mentioned had made me think about my position as a woman in society. So when I read Spare Rib I identified with a number of the views expressed and so was keen to attend meetings where I might meet people with similar views.

I attended the Women's Studies course held in Edinburgh University Extra Mural Dept. last year and learnt a lot from it. Furthermore it gave me more confidence in myself as it helped validate my own views and stimulated me into participating in the discussions. I have also attended a few meetings held in the Women's Centre at Fountainbridge.

I would like to mention as examples a few incidents and statements that I and some of my friends who attended the meetings found worrying and offensive. This is intended as constructive criticism not an attack on the movement.

At one meeting the group watched a film called 'Women at Work'. The women in the film were factory workers. What they said about their work seemed to be acceptable, however, when they were filmed in a social situation - dressed to go to the local club - a few comments like 'How awful', 'How dreadful' and embarrassed laughter seemed to me to highlight the lack of understanding between the group being filmed and those of us sitting back watching. I found the comments patronising at best.

I have heard it suggested that only women who have had a University education could fully understand the ideas of women's liberation. I disagree with this as I'm sure most of us do. Perhaps some of the jargon will not be understood by women not well acquainted with the movement but the ideas, if put across well, seem to me to be easy enough to understand,

especially if they are a large part of your personal experience.

At a meeting I attended one woman spoke of 'the kind of people' who live in places such as Muirhouse as 'dull and boring', etc. Such sweeping condemnation again seem to me to show a very real gap between this 'middle class' woman and the people she was talking about. Furthermore, no-one in the group seemed to react to those views at all, or perhaps like me, they were dumbstruck.

It is difficult to identify with, or feel accepted by a group if the way you dress, look, i.e. your self image does not fit in with that group. A number of my own friends feel threatened by the women's movement partly because they feel the way they dress will be judged, and perhaps condemned. If you have not gone to University the way you dress is often more traditionally 'feminine'. It does not necessarily follow that your views are not 'feminist' in other directions. Perhaps the media are to blame to a large extent for giving 'women's libbers' a stereotyped image which 'ordinary' women feel threatened by but in-jokes about 'feminine women', make-up etc., are also destructive as far as I'm concerned unless it is very clear that it is the image and not the women themselves who are being condemned.

It seems natural in any group to have people from different backgrounds within that group. However, I think that class consciousness can be deeply felt and therefore your similarities as women may not be apparent for many women - like myself - for a long time. I feel it is better to discuss differences openly rather than pretend they don't exist. Hopefully in this way barriers will be knocked down and the women's movement will definitely be a movement for all women.

dorothy hay

AIMS

ASSOCIATION FOR IMPROVEMENTS
IN THE MATERNITY SERVICES

A Scottish campaign is starting. If you are interested contact :- DOREEN SPIERS
16, ARGYLE ST.
PAISLEY.

Doreen wants to put interested women in touch with each other and would like women who have recently given birth to send her a description of their ante-natal care, labour, opinion of the hospital etc. She would also like to develop an organised view of maternity services in Scotland.

LETTERS: 'Joe's Drum'

Last Tuesday I attended a performance of "Joe's Drum" by the 7:84 theatre company. The production was offensive, to me and to others in the audience, in its treatment of women. The only woman appearing was the wife of the "hero", she was condemned to shuffle about five feet behind him, being summoned by a whistle to benefit from his words of wisdom, but only when there was no-one to see him speaking to a woman. Historically very accurate no doubt, but eighteenth century Joe believed that he could teach us something about participation in government and taking responsibility for our lives. If he had stopped to think, would he really have condemned the whole of woman-kind to eternal drudgery?

The 7:84 company hope that their kind of theatre "can make a contribution to the way the Scottish working class decides its own future..." I trust their contributions will be more imaginative in future.

I was, however, moved to write this by the reaction of the audience to two women and a man who protested at the many jokes in the play made at the expense of women.

Members of the audience were purple in the face, yelling "Don't let queers stop the show" and other more disgusting remarks. This from people who laughed with 7:84 at the bigotry of lords, politicians and land-owners and who would, I believe, describe themselves as liberal and fair-minded.

What hope do "liberals" like these hold for women and oppressed minorities? If they are so incensed at losing ten minutes of their evening, how likely are they to accept the changes necessary in society?

I know I'm not going to wait for them. As 7:84 said, the time for action is now.

Yours,

Rhona Hughes
Edinburgh.
2nd June 1979.

I saw "Joe's Drum" several months after Rhona Hughes saw it (I saw it on Oct 10th in Dundee Labour Club). My opinion of the play was totally different to that of Rhona and I had a very enjoyable evening. The only woman in the play was Joe's wife - but she did speak to the audience alone when Joe was out of sight, and from the things she said about him and her facial expressions as she was following him around it was obvious to me (and other feminists in the audience that 7:84 were aware of women's position in society.

The play was historical - about someone who really did exist in Edinburgh - and so in the play he treats his wife as he really would have done. However unlike in some historical plays where it is not obvious whether or not the company realise that women's role as portrayed in the play is wrong, in "Joe's Drum" 7:84 do make this clear.

It is possible that 7:84 changed the play between the time Rhona saw it and the time I saw it - maybe one of them could write in and tell us.

Nina Woodcock.

Women and Science

On Wed. 14th. Nov. Dundee University held a conference on "Women and Science."

This was aimed at careers advisers and science teachers in the local schools, the intention being to look at the entrance and employment prospects for women students in the Faculties of Science, Engineering, Medicine and Dentistry.

The morning session consisted of staff and student speakers from the three faculties. The Deans of each faculty all stated that there was no discrimination in entrance qualifications, (there used to be a quota system in medicine but this has been abolished). Other speakers concentrated more on the problems of women and science. One of the most interesting speakers was the only woman in a third year Engineering class. She talked about everyday problems such as lecturers who said "if all you gentlemen would come this way please.....", and fellow students who disappeared to the pub after a practical lesson without inviting her - and if she complained asked her out on a one to one basis which was not what she wanted.

Other speakers mentioned the difficulty of finding part time jobs in Medicine and Dent-

istry, making it difficult for women to continue in these fields and have a family.

After lunch tours were arranged to departments of Engineering, Physics, and Chemistry where displays had been set up.

In the afternoon we heard from Mr. Gavin, the University Careers and Appointments Officer, Veronica Smith - a recent Engineering graduate from Dundee now working in industry, Anna McCloud Professor of Brewing at Heriot-Watt and Helen Cowan from A.U.E.W.-T.A.S.S., followed by more discussion.

The general impression from most of the speakers was that there is now no discrimination against women who apply to enter University to study Science or Medicine. There is also no discrimination against women who apply to do a higher degree (eg. MSc or PhD).

So we need to concentrate mainly on the schools and the way girls decide whether or not to study Science. We also need to look at why women disappear from Universities after postgraduate research and from medicine after the first couple of years. Is it direct discrimination or is it that these careers are

REVIEWS

Scottish Woman's Place

Long overdue, this book is a comprehensive guide to Women's Rights in Scotland. It fills an important gap left by other "British" feminist guides which have been largely inapplicable to Scotland's separate, and as far as women are concerned, backward legal system.

Although the book describes itself as a 'practical' guide, a title which it earns by collating an amazing amount of factual information into a well-indexed and accurate whole, it also constitutes the first serious attempt to examine the specific nature of women's oppression in Scotland. This gives the book a value which will outlive the limited lifespan of the factual information contained within it.

The reference sections which make up the bulk of the book are well researched and lucidly set out. Any woman using it would certainly find herself better equipped to negotiate anything from an abortion to a hire purchase agreement, and the scope of the book is extensive, going well beyond the familiar limits set out by other rights guides.

Given the legal orientation of the book, one might have been forgiven for thinking that Ms Hunter believes that women's liberation can be achieved through legal reforms, but any such assumptions are neatly upset in the book's opening paragraph....."This book is written as a practical guide for women in Scotland, the laws that face the, and how best to use and get around them. There will no doubt be some who will regret that I have used it as a vehicle for my own views on women's oppression. But without some such perspective there is no explanation for the failure of reforms like women's suffrage and equal pay to bring about any real change in women's lives and their expectations."

And she explores this theme in her initial chapter by examining the historical contexts in which legal reforms have arisen illustrating the political opportunism which motivated them....."We might not have won contraceptive facilities without pressure from the over-populated world lobby. And we might not have got the 1967 Abortion Act had there not, unfortunately, also been people like Sir Keith Joseph who argued "the balance of our population, our human stock is threatened. A recent

article showed that a high and rising proportion of children are being born to mothers least fitted to bring children into the world".

This political opportunism, she points out, means that hard won concessions are always vulnerable, a highly relevant comment given that we are now going to have to fight hard to defend the gains that we have made from the ravages of a far right Tory government, albeit led by a woman.

Although the book breaks no new theoretical ground it's a landmark in the output of literature from the Women's Movement in Scotland. It's outward looking, optimistic, but self-critical. At £1.95 it's essential reading for both individuals and organisations.

Joanna Blythman.

My Mother Myself

The Women's Room

Mainly through the women's presses and imprints, there is a range of broadly feminist books by and about women being published at the moment, and widely available in bookshops.

Recently I have read two of these books which I have found particularly interesting. They are *My Mother Myself* by Nancy Friday (Fantana Original £1.50) and *The Women's Room* by Marilyn French (Andre Deutsch and Sphere paperback). Nancy Friday has written a subjective, unbalanced and unscientific book which offers fascination to anyone interested in the human condition. She examines her own relationship to her mother and compares and contrasts it with many other mother/daughter situations of which she knows. She does so with a very perceptive eye.

Briefly the theme is symbiosis. Children, in order to achieve full adult maturity have to break the dependency bond with the family, which is established in infancy. Everyone has to work their way through this process but it presents particular difficulties for female children because not only are mothers the main source of dependence but they act as role models for their daughters.

The authoress suggests that some mothers, through fear of losing their children, of loneliness or from other selfish motives, will unconsciously try to prevent daughters from attaining independence by teaching one lesson with their tongue and a totally different lesson by their body language and their lifestyle and thus confuse their dependents into immobility.

Different readers, bringing their own life experience to this book make totally different judgements on it. I found it an optimistic book because it helped me clarify my ideas as to what my role as the mother of sexually blossoming teenagers should be. A friend who hails

from the same cultural background as Ms Friday found the book depressing because identifying as she did with many of the repressive attitudes of the southern United States she foresaw the inevitability of teaching her daughter the same lessons. I dispute this inevitability. If someone has had the courage to subject her family to such microscopic examination in public, we should be able to use the resulting discussion to our benefit.

The other book, *The Women's Room*, is a novel about a character called Mira. It describes her early conditioning, sexual awakening, her marriage and disappointment in that condition and its collapse. She consequently embarks on an undergraduate course in Harvard and happens among a group of mature women of many differing levels of experience, consciousness and liberation whose earliest discussions and high degree of articulation reshapes the aforesaid Mira into a being of high expectation and awareness and then sadly the novel leaves her at a point where there is little likelihood of any practical realisation of these hopes.

I found this a very readable book and particularly liked the opening chapters which deal with Mira's early life and are sufficiently thought-provoking to make me wish it was required reading on every 16 year old's school list. The disintegration of Mira's marriage was also written with disturbing clarity and only the Harvard sequence left me with the feeling that it was artificially contrived in order to get over the punch line. Are women better to have low expectations and be content or have high expectations and be unsatisfied?

To those of us as yet uncommitted and under thirty this could be an immensely helpful book. Those of us who are over the hump can but wish we had known!

Cathy Kerr.

The material covered in the book includes anatomy, sexuality, relationships, lesbianism, nutrition and health, venereal disease, and common ailments, birth control, abortion considering parenthood, child bearing, menopause, the health care system and how to use it. Some chapters can be read through very easily, others you might only want to dip into for specific information.

One of the things I like about this book is that it is not entirely London orientated. Scottish examples are sometimes used and the contacts at the end of each chapter often include addresses in various parts of Britain, not just London. Of course one of the problems with this sort of book is that some of the information is out of date by the time the book is published, addresses change, new clinics open etc. An example I noticed particularly was in the section on Breast Problems where they state "...the Edinburgh clinic sees women from all over Scotland and even in some cases from England" In fact there are now specialist Breast Clinics in other centres in Scotland such as Dundee and Glasgow so a woman from outside Edinburgh and the surrounding area is unlikely to have to travel to Edinburgh to attend a Breast Clinic.

On the whole I think this is the best womens health book available in this country, every woman should have this book or have access to it, I have used it quite a lot since I bought it even though I have had the American edition for several years. As well as being useful for personal reference I also used it to prepare a Women and Health talk for a Womens Studies Course.

In the final chapter the authors point out ways that the Health Service could change to improve womens health care, but as they say "In the meantime we will have to cope with doctors and medicine as they are now. We hope this book will have helped you to do that." I certainly feel that the book succeeds in helping women to cope with the present system.

NINA WOODCOCK.

Our Bodies Our selves

continued from page 18

difficult to combine with family responsibilities. Part-time posts and nursery facilities were mentioned by several speakers and in the discussion.

The conference was successful though rather limited and academic. The onus now lies on the schools careers advisers to invite women from the University to the schools to talk to the school students.

The conference was organised by three women members of staff in Dundee University and the schools liason office, maybe it will be repeated in other Universities and colleges.

A lot of facts and figures were produced for the conference, I shall use some of them for a future article.

"Our Bodies Ourselves" is a health book by and for women, it was first published in the U.S.A. in 1971 by the Boston Womens Health Book Collective. For the 7 years after this British women had to make do with the American version; as there are quite a lot of differences in health care between Britain and America, the British edition by Angela Phillips and Jill Rakusen is very welcome. In fact it is surprising that it has taken so long for a British edition to appear as versions in other languages e.g. Italian, appeared before the British one - of course part of the reason for this was probably that we could understand the American edition even if some of it was irrelevant to us.



the equal opportunities commission opens in scotland

On 9th April I attended the official opening of the Equal Opportunities Commission's regional office in Scotland. Although the office is in Glasgow it deals with the whole of Scotland, almost an impossibility when you consider that only one officer is employed there along with two clerical assistants (the officer is a man, the assistants female - so much for role reversal!).

The opening of the office has encouraged considerable response in Scotland. Previously only 14% of the EOC'S enquiries came from Scotland - now it is considerably more. More applications are now coming from Scotland for EOC grants, and Ron Miller, the regional officer, spends much of his time talking to employers, trade unions, education departments, and housing departments, etc.

what the e.o.c. does

The EOC was set up at the beginning of 1976 by Parliament under the Sex Discrimination Act. Its remit was 'a) to work towards the elimination of discrimination; b) to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally,' and it was also given the duty to report to the Government on the operation of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.

One of the Commission's main functions is to advise individuals on their rights under the Acts, and as part of this function it has helped many individual women with their legal fees. It is currently financing two appeals to the European Court. In addition if they suspect that a firm or organisation is persistently discriminating against one sex they can initiate a formal investigation. Organisations, firms or individuals which are persistently breaching the Acts can be served non-discrimination notices which, if not obeyed, can be backed up by court order. Yet despite these powers the EOC has to date initiated only two formal investigations, one of which took over two years. In fairness, the EOC prefers to solve problems by persuasion rather than through the courts, but it is hard to believe that only two of their attempts at persuasion have failed to succeed!

If you have a query the Glasgow office can give you general information over the telephone but specific advice can only be given on written request. Any detailed casework is normally referred to the Manchester office.

In addition the EOC monitors newspaper advertisements and takes action against those which are illegal, gives financial assistance to organisations or individuals doing research or providing education on aspects of equality and provides publications on equal pay, tax, credit facilities, mortgages, education, etc., most of which are free of charge.

The Commission's main function, besides advising individuals, is to recommend changes in the law that are not adequately covered by the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts. It has done a considerable amount of work here and made important recommendations on the inadequacies of the Acts themselves, on education, social security, pensions, income tax, childcare, and more recently on the Government's plans to introduce discriminatory immigration legislation.

But not all of the EOC's recommendations are progressive. Like most quasi-government bodies the TUC and CBI each were given three places on the Commission and the chairperson, Baroness Lockwood, was Labour, whilst the deputy chairperson, Lady Howe, was Tory. In practice this political 'balance' usually breaks down on crucial issues. The trade unions and employers could not reach agreement on payment for childcare facilities, the retirement age, and the laws protecting women factory workers. On the question of retirement the politically divided nature of the commission led it to recommend a disastrous compromise, that men and women should both retire at the age of 63. This is opposed by the trade union movement which is campaigning for a shorter working week and retirement at 60 for all. More recently the EOC's report on the repeal of some of the protective laws has been vigorously attacked.

esther breitenbach

The Scottish address is:
The Equal Opportunities Commission
249 West Regent Street
Glasgow. 041-226-4591.

and reports ...

.. on protective legislation

After two years' research and consultation the Equal Opportunities Commission recently recommended the repeal of the laws limiting the hours of women manual workers in factories. These laws restrict the amount of shiftwork, overtime and nightwork done by over one and a half million women in Britain. The EOC report (1) states that "equal opportunity must be our first consideration" and concludes that the hours of work restrictions do limit women's opportunity to enter certain industries which use nightworkers. But before feminists start applauding this gesture towards equality it is important to examine the historical background to protective legislation and the role played by feminists and trade unionists in their development.

Before the introduction of the factory system women, like men, worked in the home. Industrialisation brought whole families into the factories - men, women and children. And so the factory system inherited the worst features of the domestic system without any of the compensation.

The campaigns for the Factory Acts initially centred round the employment of children, whose appalling conditions have been well chronicled. The first four Acts from 1801 applied only to children. But support for the restriction of women's work also gained momentum, especially among evangelical puritans who were concerned more by the moral degradation suspected in women factory workers than by their exploitation at work. Thus Lord Shaftesbury said in the House of Lords "In the male the moral effects of the system are very sad, but in the female they are infinitely worse, not only upon themselves, but on their families, upon society and, I may add, upon the country itself." (2) Concern was felt for the (very real) neglect of the young children of mothers forced into the factories but also at the suspected sexual promiscuity. "The evils of a Factory-life are incalculable, there uninformed unrestrained youth of both sexes mingle, absent from parental vigilance, the mind exposed to corruption and life and limbs exposed to machinery" said the Manchester weavers in 1823. (3)

From the beginning the support of many male workers for limiting women's employment was suspect. Many men resented the idea of women working outside the home, but most of all they resented women taking jobs that men could do, often undercutting their wages. The Short-Time Committees set up to push for a shorter working week also campaigned for a ban on employing married women. But the men's fears came out of what seemed to them to be economic necessity. In the early 1830's between a third and a half of the labour force in textiles were under 21 and of the adults two thirds were women. This had a considerable effect on the wage rates offered by employers. Thus moral indignation combined with financial hardship to keep women dependent on the home. Of course society's hypocritical indignation at women working was one of the main causes of their low pay in the first place.

This attitude to women workers was not exclusive to the U.K. Throughout the industrialising world men supported moves to restrict women's hours for

the same reasons. American cigar workers in 1879 stated that "We cannot drive the females out of the trade but we can restrict their daily quota of labour through factory laws."

Agitation for a ten hour day for women workers reached a height in the 1830's among textile workers. In 1832 the Chartists formulated their five demands for workers, including a ten hour day for all workers. Women workers campaigned along with male workers but some women fought against restrictions for women only. Female operatives at Tormordan wrote in 1833 to the Examiner newspaper that their conditions were better than those of domestic servants and that if they were prevented from working they would have no-one to support them unless they "set off husband-hunting and jumped ashore with whoever wants me".

The 1844 Factory Act gave women textile workers a 12 hour day. This was reduced to ten hours by the 1847 Act but in 1850 raised to 10½ hours. The 1867 Act extended protection to most categories of women workers but did not include those women most in need of protection, homeworkers and those in sweatshops. The fact that these workers doing traditional female jobs have never been protected shows how concern was aimed more at the types of work women did than the conditions they worked in. Moves to introduce a Consolidating Bill in 1874 were opposed by an active feminist lobby who saw it as an attempt to limit women's opportunities at work. At the 1875 Trade Union Congress the Bill was supported by both men and women delegates, except the Women's Protective and Provident League which had been set up to promote the unionisation of women workers. If the middle-class feminists were suspicious of the motives of male trade unionists, their own motives were suspected by the trade unions. Millicent Fawcett, an active suffragette, had opposed legal restrictions in the use of yellow phosphorus in match making but was a major shareholder in Bryant and May's. Nevertheless the League's own record on this and other health and welfare measures was excellent and they won many improvements for women at work.

The Bill became law in 1878. Its effect, like that of the other Acts, was double-edged. The Miners' Federation, for example, tried to use it to stop women working at the pithead. But it did genuinely improve the conditions of many working women. The feminists at the time did not sufficiently take account of the incredible hardships faced by women workers not only because of the nature of their work but because of their additional burdens at home. They also did not foresee how the limitations on women's hours of work would pave the way for the eventual introduction of a normal forty hour week for workers of both sexes.

The same dilemma poses itself today. There is little point in arguing for an abstract equality if it is the right to be equally exploited at work. The move towards repealing the protective laws has from the start been politically motivated. Employers have consistently sought their removal just as they once fought their introduction. During the 1st World Wars they were suspended and since World War Two the unions and employers have been locked in conflict over the issue. In 1945 the Minister for Labour, Ernest Bevin, set up a committee to look into the "economic need for and the social consequences of the shift system". When the committee reported in favour of two shifts per day, the Government authorised shifts up to twelve hours and up to twelve and a half hours for women working a four day week.

Out of loyalty to the new Labour Government the unions did not make a fuss but later the TUC General Council managed to persuade the Government to revoke the order.

In 1966 pressure from the CBI led the Department of Employment's National Advisory Council to set up a working party to examine the protective laws. The CBI and TUC representatives on the working party could not reach agreement. Despite this the Department of Employment circulated a discussion document proposing abolition. But because of TUC opposition the subsequent Labour Government exempted the protective laws from the provisions of the Equal Pay Act in 1970. The Tory Government in 1973 proposed the repeal of the restrictions but the next year the Labour Government as a 'compromise' included a provision in the Sex Discrimination Act that the new Equal Opportunities Commission should review the workings of the restrictions.

Is there any Need for the Protective Laws for Women Today ?

The EOC took equality of opportunity as its first consideration and asked itself two questions. Do the restrictions limit women's opportunities? What do women workers themselves want? They discovered that some employers use them as an EXCUSE for not employing women. 30% of women affected are actually exempted under Exemption orders which are granted if it is in "the public's interest" to do so. Seldom are exemption orders refused, and they can be made even without the consent of the employees or trade union concerned. So the Acts are hardly any real barrier for employers.

The EOC asked the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to carry out a survey into the views of women, only some of whom were themselves factory workers. 11% of those interviewed were willing to work night shifts. The proportion was much higher for women with young children, but the EOC did not seem to realise how much more vulnerable this makes these women. A questionnaire cannot adequately deal with the health and social consequences of shift and night work which international studies have clearly shown to result in headaches, depression, broken family and social life, stomach complaints and insomnia. Women would be particularly unable to cope with these effects if they have children to look after during the day.

The EOC itself admits that if the laws are repealed women could lose their jobs if they refuse to work shifts. To deal with this they suggest that the Department of Employment draw up a Code of Practice for employers. It is naive to imagine the Tory Government introducing such a code given their present attacks on workers' rights, or even to assume that such a code could work without legislative backing.

The main flaw in the EOC's recommendation is its premise that equality is the main consideration, because real equality cannot be sought by downgrading conditions for either sex. The inadequacies of the protective laws are not who they affect, but who they do not affect. The TUC has called for their extension to men and to women not yet covered by them, such as night cleaners. This is not as pie-in-the-sky as it might sound. In Belgium, Norway, and Sweden, nightwork is banned in all but continuous-processing industries. In those industries where nightwork is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL rather than merely convenient or profitable for the employer, unsocial shifts could be allowed for both sexes

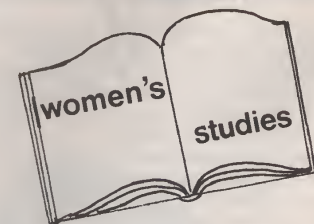
along with adequate extra time off to compensate. These industries are very few and include hospitals, entertainments and continuous-processing operations.

The Health and Safety Executive is now considering the EOC's report and consulting unions and employers. Once the Health and Safety Commission reports, the Employment Secretary could repeal the restrictions by Parliamentary Order alone without the safeguard of parliamentary debate or a vote. No section of the Women's Liberation Movement has so far submitted evidence on the matter to either the EOC or the Health and Safety Executive to challenge the CBI's claim to represent the interests of women. In their own words, 'The CBI considers that all the present restrictions on the hours of women are archaic and irrelevant in present day conditions and are certainly an impediment to equal opportunities of employment for women.' If they're that keen on equality why have employers been so slow to give us equal pay!

References.

1. Health and Safety Legislation: Should we discriminate against men and women? Available free of charge from the EOC, Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester. Besides the hours of work provisions the report also makes a number of recommendations on lead, ionising radiations, heavy weights and underground mining, most of which are good.
2. Quoted in Sheila Lewenhak, 'Women and Trade Unions.'
3. Quoted in E. P. Thompson, 'The Making of the English Working Classes.'
4. Quoted by Alice Henry in 'The Trade Union Woman.'
5. Quoted by Ivy Pinchbeck in 'Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750 -1850.'

eveline hunter



Women's Studies is still a comparatively new phenomenon in Scotland. In comparison to the situation in England, Scotland is backward. In comparison to the situation in other Western countries, particularly the USA and Canada, Scotland is positively underdeveloped. We would not like to claim priority for any particular group in Scotland, but the course in Edinburgh is probably the longest running. A group has been formed much more recently in Glasgow, and we know of other women's studies activities, whether extra mural courses at universities, Worker's Educational Association classes, or the mother and toddler groups

formed to discuss 'Women in Focus' (see SWLJ no. 2) in many parts of the country, including Aberdeen, Dundee, Dumbartonshire and Lanarkshire. Women's Studies is a 'growth area', and while this means professional academics may use it to enhance their careers, it also means that there is greater scope for the propagation of feminist ideas. Two members of the Msprint collective, who have been involved in Women's Studies in Scotland, write briefly about the groups in Edinburgh and Glasgow. (We first met at a Women's Studies class!) We hope that this will provide both information and encouragement to other women who might be interested in setting up Women's Studies in their areas.

Glasgow

Glasgow Women's Studies group has been in existence for about a year. Its main function is to provide a forum for discussion around topics which individual women may have worked on or of which the group as a whole have chosen. Currently meetings alternate between women giving talks or papers and discussion on texts previously agreed on. It is important to stress that although most members of the group are University educated and several are in academic positions the group is not formal or academic in character. Giving papers may sound intimidating. However this does not consist of the intellectual exhibitionism often to be found in academia, but a genuine exchange of information and ideas. Up till now this side of the group's activities has been most successful. Amongst topics presented to the group have been protective legislation, childbirth, women in Cuba, women factory workers and women home workers.

Some good discussions based on reading have also taken place, in particular a feminist critique of anthropology and on domestic labour. It has been agreed that discussions should focus around a theme or themes for

Half the Sky

An important book for feminists engaged in Women's Studies has just been published. Half the Sky (Virago £3.95) is an introduction to Women's Studies written by the Bristol Women's Studies group. It consists of extracts from a wide range of work, which illustrate attitudes towards women and ideas about their role in society. Extracts are grouped into chapters on different topics, and are followed by lists for further reading. Advice on how to run courses is also given. For the teacher this is a valuable source book. However, I would issue a word of warning to the intending student. Such a collection of extracts is by nature both eclectic and superficial, and while it is a useful guide to what exists it cannot be taken as the last word on women's oppression or liberation. I think it is safe to assume that the authors never intended it should be, but the manner in which the extracts are presented and connected amounts to a statement of a very definite view of women's oppression, often in the most broad general terms. The book fails to do justice to the writers and

several sessions and it would be good to see such sustained discussions taking off. In this way we might advance our understanding of theoretical perspectives on women's oppression. Glasgow Women's Studies group is still in a relatively early stage of development and is already showing potential for bringing together work being done by women in Scotland which may form the basis for future publications. I would like to see it also develop into a teaching group, initiating courses in women's studies and extending the reach of feminist ideas.

Esther Breitenbach

Edinburgh

The Women's Studies course in Edinburgh is now in its fifth year. It is run through the Extra Mural Department of the University and each year a new group of women takes on the job of running the course. Together they plan the programme and run the sessions, but they submit their planning to the women who come as students, invite feedback and criticism from them and after the first term the course is generally planned by the whole group. Despite the large increase in fees for Extra Mural classes in the last couple of years the class is well attended and has always taken up the option of a third term. The course seems to me to perform two very necessary functions: firstly, it provides a situation in which women can come together and explore their ideas about women's oppression without committing themselves at first, and secondly, it is a way for women to find out about women's liberation and the women's movement when they would find it difficult to come to a women's meeting. I think its continuance is a result of this felt need, and of the interest and enthusiasm amongst already committed feminists in sharing and spreading feminist ideas.

Sally Henry



theories quoted and referred to. I think this illustrates a dilemma frequently to be found in Women's Studies. This dilemma is how to we introduce as many women as possible to feminist ideas and at the same time advance our theoretical understanding of women's oppression. Women's studies courses overthrow many of the norms of educational practice. They are often taught by several people. The distinction between teacher and pupil is broken down. Students are invited to participate on the basis of our all being the same, all having experience of women's oppression, there being no experts, no-one with a monopoly on knowledge. There is some truth in all this, but taken to its extreme it becomes a new feminist irrationalism which asserts 'I am, therefore I think'. Such notions of accessibility and participation, while well intentioned, often lead to a rejection of theory or difficult ideas. Half the Sky, in order to make accessible to women a wide range of material, sacrifices depth for breadth, and therefore fails to deal adequately with the theoretical issues being debated in Women's Studies.